



Menander

THE GROUCH

Translated by Lionel Casson

Characters *Pan*

Chaereas, a young man who makes his way by sponging on his rich friend Sostratus

Sostratus, a wealthy, young Athenian man about town, in love with Cnemon's daughter

Pyrrhias, servant (slave) of Sostratus

Cnemon, the grouch, a sour-tempered old farmer, father of the girl Sostratus loves

Cnemon's daughter

Davus, servant (slave) of Gorgias

Gorgias, a self-reliant, young Athenian farmer, stepson of Cnemon and half-brother of the girl Sostratus loves

Sicon, a chef

Geta, Sostratus' father's servant (slave) whose services Sostratus enlists in his own behalf

Simike, an elderly female servant of Cnemon's, his daughter's old nurse

Callippides, father of Sostratus

[Myrrhina, Cnemon's wife, mother of Gorgias by a former marriage]

The scene is laid in Phyle, a country district outside Athens. In the center is the entrance to a grotto sacred to the god Pan and his nymphs. On either side are houses, stage right that of CNEMON, stage left that of GORGIAS. The exit on stage left leads to Athens, that on stage right to the open country where Cnemon and Gorgias have their fields.

Prologue

[Out of a doorway made up to look like the entrance to a cave comes the god PAN. He is the mischievous fellow, goat from the waist down and man from the waist up except for goat's ears and horns, whose divine powers include, among others, that of inspiring lovers. The locale is a more or less unfrequented spot in Phyle, a country district about thirteen miles north of Athens where a well-known sanctuary sacred to Pan was located.

Pan

[to the audience] I want you to imagine that this [with a sweeping gesture] is Phyle, near Athens, and that this cave I've just come out of is the famous sanctuary of the nymphs that belongs to the people of Phyle and the others who manage to coax crops out of the stones around here. Now, the property on my right here belongs to Cnemon. He's a man whose one main aim is to be anti-men. He's mean to everybody, dislikes being with people—being with people did I say? He's lived a good many years by now and so far he hasn't uttered a kind word in his life. The only conversations he ever starts are when he goes past my door—and that's only because I'm a neighbor and he can't avoid it. I'm convinced he regrets it the next minute.

Surprisingly enough, considering the sort he is, he took a wife. He married a widow right after she had lost her first husband and had been left with a son who was still just a child at the time. Cnemon led a miserable life with her, quarreling with her not only all day but most of the night too. They had a daughter. That made things even worse. [Pauses and shakes his head sorrowfully over the fate of a child born into such a household.]

When the situation got as bad as it could possibly be and her life was nothing but bitterness and hardship, his wife left him and went to live with the son she had had by her first husband. He has a scrap of land [*Pointing.*] adjoining here and he barely manages to squeeze enough from it to feed himself, his mother, and a single faithful old servant who once belonged to his father. He's a young fellow now, and wise beyond his years; the school of hard knocks has a way of accelerating a man's education. The old man lives alone with his daughter and an old hag of a servant and spends his days hauling wood, digging, slaving—and hating everyone in turn, beginning with his wife and neighbors here and going right on through to the outskirts of Athens. The girl has gotten this much benefit from the way she's been brought up: she simply doesn't know what it is to do wrong. And she's respected and worshiped me and my nymphs to the point where she's inclined us to make her our special charge. [*Leaning forward and speaking confidentially.*] Now, a young fellow whose father owns farmland around here worth a fortune, and who lives in style in the city, went out hunting with his servant and happened to come to this place. And I've made him fall madly in love with the girl. [*Straightens up and pauses for a moment to let what he has just said sink in.*]

Those are the salient points. Please be good enough to stay, if you will, and watch the whole story unfold. [*Looking off toward the wings, stage left.*] Well, I think I see our young lover and somebody with him coming this way. They're talking about how he fell in love.

Act One

[SOSTRATUS and CHAEREAS enter, stage left. SOSTRATUS is a fine-looking young man dressed in an elaborate hunting costume that obviously cost a good deal of money. He has an open, candid countenance, the sort that inspires immediate confidence, and an eager and enthusiastic temperament that is particularly appealing. It is clear from his manner at the moment that something significant has happened to him to which he has reacted strongly, as one of his nature would. His companion is totally different. He is also young but there is nothing open in his nature. He is, as a matter of fact, a professional scrounger, a quick-witted sort who makes his way by attaching himself to rich friends such as SOSTRATUS and by rendering for them, in return for their hospitality, certain favors, often of a shady nature. SOSTRATUS has just finished telling him something as they enter.]

Chaereas

What's this you tell me, Sostratus? You saw a respectable girl praying to the nymphs here [Gesturing toward the grotto.], you fell in love with her on the spot, and then turned around and left?

Sostratus

On the spot.

Chaereas

[Smiling superciliously.] Pretty quick work. What did you do? Leave your house with the idea of falling in love with someone?

Sostratus

[Resentfully.] It may be a joke to you, Chaereas, but I'm in a bad way.

Chaereas

[Quickly.] Oh, I believe you.

Sostratus

I consider you not only my friend but a man who gets things done. That's why I'm bringing you into this affair.

Chaereas

[With a professional air.] Well, Sostratus, here's how I handle affairs of this sort. If a friend of mine falls in love with some chorus girl and comes to me for help, I go right out and grab the girl to haul her off to him; I get drunk, I burn down her door, I don't listen to reason. The trick is to let him get her before you even find out her name. Because, if there's any delay, he'll get more and more infatuated, but if it's done quickly there's a chance he'll get over it quickly. On the other hand, if a friend brings up the subject of marriage with a respectable girl, then I'm totally different. I find out about her family, the way she lives, what her character's like. That way I'm in a position to leave my friend a reminder he'll never forget, to guide him.

Sostratus

That sounds fine. [Aside.] But not for me.

Chaereas

[Rubbing his hands energetically with the air of a man ready to get right to work.] Well, now, the first thing we have to do is get a full report on her.

Sostratus

I had Pyrrhias, the servant who went hunting with me, leave the house at the crack of dawn this morning.

Chaereas

What for?

Sostratus

To speak to the girl's father or the head of the household, whoever he is.

Chaereas

[Disgusted.] Oh, my god, what's this you're telling me?

Sostratus

[Unhappily.] I made a mistake. I guess you shouldn't use a servant for this sort of thing. But when a man's in love, it's hard for him to know what's the right thing to do. [Looking around anxiously.] I've been wondering for some time now what's been keeping him. I told him to come right back to me as soon as he had found out the lie of the land.

[At this moment PYRRHIAS bursts in, stage right, running at top speed and shouting.]

Pyrrhias

Gangway, everybody clear the road! Watch out, there's a lunatic after me, a raving lunatic!

Sostratus

[Grabbing him and forcibly holding him back.] What's the matter?

Pyrrhias

[Shouting.] Run for your lives!

Sostratus

What is it?

Pyrrhias

He's heaving things at me! Sticks and stones! He's going to kill me!

Sostratus

Heaving things? Where, you good-for-nothing?

Pyrrhias

[Looking around warily and not seeing anyone.] I guess he stopped chasing me.

Sostratus

You're darned right he did.

Pyrrhias

But I thought he was.

Sostratus

Now what's this all about?

Pyrrhias

[Still quaking.] Please! Let's get out of here.

Sostratus

Where?

Pyrrhias

[Pointing to Cnemon's house.] Away from that door. As far as we can get. That house you sent me to—the devil's own son lives there, a demon, a madman. What he did to me! I had to run for it and I kept stumbling and just about lost every one of my toes.

Chaereas

Went after you, eh? He's mad. Or maybe he was drunk.

Sostratus

Oh, mad, no doubt about it.

Chaereas

God, yes; out of his mind.

Pyrrhias

Sostratus, he'll kill us!

Sostratus

[*Casting a wary eye at the house.*] Watch the way you talk around here. [He leads the two off to the side of the stage.]

Pyrrhias

I can hardly talk, I'm so out of breath. Well, I knocked on the door and said I wanted the head of the house. Some old witch came out. From the very spot where I was talking to you just now, she pointed to where he was, on a hill dragging himself around to pick up wild pears—or maybe some wood to hang himself with.

Chaereas

[*Sarcastically.*] Pretty violent carryings-on.

Pyrrhias

What did you expect? Well, I walked off the road into the field and headed toward him. I wanted to be real friendly and tactful, so I called out while I was still some distance away. "I beg your pardon," I said, "but I've come here to you because I'm very anxious about a matter that concerns you." He starts right in yelling at me, "You godforsaken good-for-nothing, what do you mean by trespassing on my property?" and then he picks up a clod and heaves it straight at my face.

Chaereas

He can go to the devill

Pyrrhias

I just about had time to blink and say, "God damn you," when he picks up one of his vine stakes and starts clobbering me with it, hollering, "What business can you have wth me, anyway? Can't you tell a public road from private property?"—all at the top of his lungs.

Chaereas

[*Nodding knowingly.*] One of those crazy hicks.

Pyrrhias

It ended up with him chasing me about a mile and a half, all around the hill and down into the brush here, throwing clods and stones at me. Even his pears, when he didn't have anything better. He's a wild one, all right. Some godforsaken old crank! Please! Let's get out of here!

Sosratus

[*Stubbornly.*] What do you think I am, a coward?

Pyrrhias

[*Frantically.*] You don't understand. We're in danger.
He'll eat us alive!

Chaereas

He's probably sick and is having some sort of attack.
That's why, if you ask me, Sosratus, I'd put off seeing
him. Always remember that the best way to get any-
thing done is to pick the psychological moment.

Pyrrhias

That makes sense.

Chaereas

These half-starved hicks have mean tempers. Not just
this one, but practically all of them. Tomorrow, first
thing, I'll go see him by myself, now that I know where
he lives. Right now you go home and take it easy.
Everything will turn out all right.

[*Takes his leave, stage left.*]

Pyrrhias

Let's do that.

Sosratus

[*To PYRRHIAS angrily, gesturing toward the departing CHAEREAS.*] He's delighted to get an excuse so quickly.
I could see he wasn't any too anxious to come along with
me, and took a dim view of my going after this mar-
riage. But you! Damn you, anyway! How stupid can
you be?

Pyrrhias

What'd I do that was wrong, Sosratus?

Sosratus

You trespassed on his property. No question about it.

Pyrrhias

But it couldn't be helped!

Sosratus

Would anyone have beaten you up if you hadn't done
something wrong?

Pyrrhias

[*Happening to look up in the direction of the wings, stage
right.*] Hey! Here he comes!

Sosratus

[*Urgently.*] Be a good fellow and go up to him.

Pyrrhias

No, you talk to him.

Sosstratus

Oh, I couldn't. I'm no good at talking; nobody ever believes me.

Pyrrhias

[*Looking toward the wings again, fearfully.*] How would you describe someone like that, anyway?

Sosstratus

He doesn't exactly look like the friendly type. My god, what a scowl! We'd better get a little farther away from his door. Look—no one's with him and he's shouting away. If you ask me, he's a sick man. God in heaven, he scares me! It's the truth, let's face it.

[*CNEMON strides in, stage right, talking at the top of his lungs as he goes along. He's all that we have been led to expect: a sour-tempered old codger, gnarled and bent from a lifetime of work in the fields, and utterly indifferent to his appearance—he is dressed in worn work clothes that are a mass of tatters, and his hair is unkempt. His disposition has obviously not been improved by his recent contretemps with PYRRHIAS.*

Cnemon

[*Haranguing the world at large.*] It's that fellow Perseus in the story who's the really lucky one. For two reasons. First, he had wings so he never had to meet anyone walking around on the ground. Second, he had some sort of gadget to turn anyone who bothered him into stone. I wish I had it right now—I'd fill the place with statues. God almighty, the way things are these days, life isn't worth living. Now people trespass on your property to come and jabber away at you. So help me, I used to live along this road, but I don't work this section of my property at all any longer. I've given it up. Too many people around. And now they even chase me up into the hills! [Gritting his teeth and clenching his fists.] Oh, these crowds, these mobs! [Noticing SOSTRATUS in front of his house.] More trouble? Who's that in front of my door, anyway?

[Heads straight for SOSTRATUS.

Sosstratus

[*Sotto voce, to PYRRHIAS.*] Is he going to hit me?

Cnemon

[As before.] A man couldn't find any privacy even if he wanted to hang himself!

Sostratus

[*Sotto voce, to PYRRHIAS.*] He's got it in for me!

[*Visibly braces himself. As CNEMON comes near, in his most courteous manner.*] I beg your pardon. I'm waiting for someone here. I had an appointment with him.

Cnemon

[As before.] Didn't I tell you? [To SOSTRATUS.] What did you think this was, anyway, a public square? [With ponderous sarcasm.] If you want to meet people in front of my door, why don't you be sensible about it? Rearrange everything, install a nice comfortable chair here. Better yet, build yourself a town hall.

[Charges into his house, slamming the door behind him.

Sostratus

[*Dismayed at the prospect that lies ahead of him, to PYRRHIAS.*] This is awful! [Shaking his head incredulously.] What a boor! It's downright sinful, if you ask me. And, if you ask me, ordinary measures aren't going to help. We've got to do something drastic. No question about it. [Brightening.] Why don't I go see Geta, my father's servant? By god, that's what I'll do. He's a fellow with nerve and he knows his way around. He'll handle the old grouch, I know it. I have no intention of losing any time in this project; a lot can be accomplished in one day. [*There's a noise at CNEMON's door.*] Wait—someone's coming out.

[The door swings open and CNEMON'S DAUGHTER comes out. She is dressed as simply as possible and is carrying a homely kitchen pot, but somehow her radiant young beauty remains unimpaired. It has a special quality that sets her off, raises her above everything about her. The minute she closes the door and turns to the audience, it is apparent that she is greatly upset.

Girl

[To herself.] Oh, dear, this is simply terrible! What am I going to do? My old nurse went to draw some water and dropped the bucket in the well!

Sostratus

[*Transfixed at the sight of the GIRL, to himself.*] Ye gods! Ye gods in heaven! She's beautifull! She's irresistible!

Girl

[*To herself.*] Papa had given orders when he left to heat up some water.

Sostratus

[*Still in a daze, to himself.*] Beautiful! Simply beautiful.

Girl

[*To herself.*] And if he ever finds out about this, he'll beat her to within an inch of her life. Oh, dear, I don't have much time. [*Turns and starts to walk toward the grotto.*] My darling nymphs, I'll take some of your water. [*Suddenly stops.*] Oh, there may be some people praying inside. I'd be mortified if I disturbed them.

Sostratus

[*Recovering his wits, approaches her and addresses her in his most gallant manner.*] May I? I'll fill it for you and bring it right back.

Girl

Why, thank you!

Sostratus

[*As he walks toward the grotto.*] Just a lovely country girl. O Lord, I feel the pangs of love—there's no saving me now!

Girl

[*Starting as she hears the creak of a door opening.*] Oh, dear, someone's coming out. Maybe it's Papal He'll beat me if he catches me outside here!

[*It is the door of GORGIAS' house, not CNEMON'S, that opens and DAVUS, GORGIAS' servant, comes out. The girl breathes a sigh of relief.* DAVUS is an old, devoted family retainer who had once belonged to GORGIAS' father. But, like many old men, he has a tendency to be cranky—and the long years of hard work he has put in helping the family eke out their bare existence hasn't helped matters.]

Davus

[*Talking through the doorway to MYRRHINA, GORGIAS' mother, inside.*] I've spent enough time around here helping you. He's out there digging all by himself. I'd better go to him. [*Turns from the door and starts walking, muttering to himself.*] Oh, this poverty! Why do we have to have such a bad case of it? Why does it have to move into our house and live with us like a permanent guest?

[SOSTRATUS emerges from the grotto with the pot now full of water and walks toward the GIRL.]

Sostratus

Here you are.

Girl

Please put it here.

Davus

[Hearing the voices and noticing the two, to himself.]

What's that fellow after, anyway?

Sostratus

Goodbye. Take care of your father. [To himself, in despair.] Oh, my god, my god!

Pyrrhias

[Soothingly.] Stop moaning, Sostratus. It's going to be all right.

Sostratus

All right? How?

Pyrrhias

Don't worry. You just said you were going after Geta. Go ahead. Tell him everything that's happened and bring him back with you. [The two leave, stage left.]

Davus

[To himself.] What the devil's going on here? I don't like this business of a youngster doing favors for a girl; it's bad stuff. Cnemon, I hope you rot in hell! What do you mean by letting an innocent girl go out by herself in a deserted place like this without sending somebody along to look after her the way you should? This youngster probably got wind of the situation and sneaked in here figuring he had hit the jackpot. Well, I've got to tell her brother about this as soon as I can so that we can arrange to keep an eye on her. Matter of fact, I think I'll go do that right now. [There's a sound of music and song; he looks toward the wings, stage left.] And I see that one of Pan's congregations is coming here—and they're all a little high. If you ask me, this is no time to get in their way. [Leaves, stage right.]

[A CHORUS, dressed as worshipers of PAN, comes on and dances an entr'acte.

Act Two

[DAVUS enters, stage right, followed by a man dressed in work clothes that, although worn, are clean and neat. It is GORGLAS, CNEMON's stepson. His mother had taken him from CNEMON's household when he was still a child and it was the best thing she could have done: he has grown into a sturdy, fine-looking young man; despite his dress, you can see at a glance that he is no ordinary peasant. The hard life he is forced to lead hasn't warped him; he has the intelligence and strength of character to take a philosophical view of his situation. DAVUS has just told him about the intruder and the two have come to see if he's still around.

Gorgias

You mean to say you handled the situation that badly, that carelessly?

Davus

[On the defensive.] What do you mean?

Gorgias

You should have realized then and there that, whoever he was, he was making advances to the girl. You should have told him that we don't want to catch him doing this ever again. What you did was to turn your back on him as if it was none of your business. Davus, a man can't get out of family obligations, and that means I've got to keep an eye on my sister. Her father chooses to act like a stranger toward us, but we don't have to copy what that old grouch does. Because, if the girl gets involved in a scandal, the blame's going to fall on me too. Outsiders hear about only what's happened, not who's responsible for it. Let's go see the old fellow.

Davus

But, Gorgias, I'm afraid of him. The minute he catches

sight of me heading for his door, he'll hang me on the spot.

Gorgias

[*Nodding assent gloomily.*] Oh, he's a hard one to reason with, all right. I can see absolutely no way we can force him to behave better, or talk him into changing his ways. He's got the law to stop us from doing anything by force—and that temper of his from accomplishing anything by talk. [Starts walking off.]

Davus

[*Looking toward the wings, stage left.*] Wait a second. It wasn't a waste of time after all to come here. I told you he'd come back. There he is.

Gorgias

[*Following DAVUS' glance.*] Is that the fellow you were telling me about? With the fancy jacket?

Davus

That's the one.

Gorgias

One look and you can see he's up to no good.

[*SOSTRATUS enters, stage left, so absorbed in his thoughts that he doesn't notice DAVUS and GORGIAS.*]

Sostratus

[*To the audience.*] I couldn't get Geta. He wasn't in; my mother had sent him out to hire a chef. She's giving a party to celebrate some religious holiday. Don't ask me which—she goes in for this sort of thing every day of the week; goes around the whole town saying prayers. I said No, thank you, to the party and came back here. I've made up my mind to quit beating around the bush. I'm going to speak for myself. And I'm going to knock on the door right now so's not to give myself time for second thoughts.

Gorgias

[*Coming forward.*] Mister, would you mind listening to me for a moment? I've got something important to tell you.

Sostratus

[*Looking up in surprise, but responding with the courtesy that comes naturally to him.*] I'd be very glad to. What is it?

Gorgias

[*Eyeing Sostratus closely and speaking earnestly and with conviction.*] Some of us are well off and some not. But

I'm convinced there isn't a man in this world whose situation is permanent; there's always a chance it can change. If a man's well off, things in life will keep going well for him only so long as he's able to handle his good luck and keep from doing wrong. When it comes to the point where he's led astray by the good things he has, then his life is going to take a turn for the worse. On the other hand, take people who aren't well off. If, in spite of all their handicaps, they can keep from doing wrong and can bear up under their fate like men of character, once they've proved themselves they can look forward to a change for the better eventually. What do I mean by all this? That you, no matter how well-to-do you are, shouldn't take this state of affairs for granted. Nor should you look down on us just because we're poor. You've got to make sure that, in people's eyes, you seem to deserve your good luck.

Sosstratus

[*Puzzled, not catching the drift of these remarks.*] And just what do I seem to you to be doing now that isn't as it should be?

Gorgias

[*Looking him straight in the eye.*] I think you've been trying hard to do something mean and unworthy. You've got it in mind to talk a respectable girl into doing wrong. You're looking for a chance to do something you ought to pay for with your life.

Sosstratus

[*Stunned.*] Oh, my god!

Gorgias

You have no right to spend your leisure time hurting people who don't know what leisure is. Remember, there's no one more bitter than a poor man who's been wronged. He's someone you should feel sorry for, to begin with; and, on top of that, remember to place the blame for what he puts up with where it belongs, on fate and not on any wrongdoing on his part.

Sosstratus

[*Finally realizing what lies behind all this, earnestly.*] Mister, I'm ready to wish you all the luck, wealth and leisure in the world if you'll just listen to me for a moment.

Davus

[To GORGIAS.] That's telling him, Gorgias! Good work!

Sostratus

[To DAVUS, *angrily*.] And you listen too, blabbermouth!

[To GORGIAS.] I saw a girl here. I fell in love with her. If this is wrong, then I guess I've done a wrong. What's there to complain about? I haven't come here to make advances to her. I want to see her father. Look, I'm a respectable Athenian citizen, I've got a good income, and I'm ready to take her without any dowry and give you my oath that I'll never stop loving her. [With *deep conviction*.] Mister, may this god [Gesturing toward the grotto.] strike me dead on this spot if I came here to harm or try some underhand trick on you people. Believe me, I'm upset, terribly so, if I've given that sort of impression to you.

Gorgias

[Visibly impressed.] And if I've used stronger language with you than necessary, please don't let that trouble you. You've not only convinced me, but I'm ready to be your friend. And, my dear fellow, I want you to know that I'm no stranger to her. I'm her half-brother; she and I have the same mother. And, believe me, I can be a great help to you from now on.

Sostratus

[Eagerly.] A help? How?

Gorgias

I can see that you're a gentleman. I don't want to make up any excuses to get you away from here. I just want to make clear what the facts of the situation are. This girl's father is in a class by himself. There's no one like him alive today, and there never has been.

Sostratus

The old grouch? [Grimly.] I know a little about him.

Gorgias

They don't come any worse. This property he's got is worth sixty thousand dollars. He always works it all by himself. Never gets anybody to help him, no slaves, no local hired hands, no neighbors. Does it all by himself. You see, his greatest pleasure in life is not to have to set eyes on another soul. He usually works with the girl at his side. She's the only one he'll talk to. As a matter of fact, he'd find it hard to exchange a word

with anyone else. And he claims he won't let her marry until he can find a son-in-law exactly like himself.

Sosstratus

You mean never!

Gorgias

[Urgently.] My dear fellow, don't go looking for trouble.

You'll just be wasting your time. Leave it to us to put up with the situation. We're his relatives; it's our lot in life.

Sosstratus

[Heatedly.] For god's sake, mister, haven't you ever been in love?

Gorgias

[Gloomily.] My dear fellow, that's out of the question.

Sosstratus

Why? What's to stop you?

Gorgias

The sum total of all the troubles I'm up against. They don't give me a moment's respite.

Sosstratus

I don't think you've had much experience with love.

You're asking me to give up. [Fervently.] That's no longer in my power, only in god's.

Gorgias

It's not that you're doing us any harm, it's just that you're giving yourself a lot of trouble for nothing.

Sosstratus

Can't I get the girl somehow?

Gorgias

No, you can't. Just come along with me and I'll prove it to you; it so happens he's working in the valley right near where I am.

Sosstratus

How?

Gorgias

I'll make a remark about getting the girl married. The minute he hears something like that mentioned, he'll wade right in gleefully and attack everybody in creation, sneering at the lives they lead. And, if he gets a look at you, the picture of a gentleman of leisure, he won't be able to bear the sight of you.

Sosstratus

Is he out there now?

Gorgias

Oh, no. But he'll go out a little later by the route he usually takes.

Sostratus

[*Eagerly.*] Now, please tell me this: will he have the girl with him?

Gorgias

It depends. Maybe.

Sostratus

[*Resolutely.*] Then I'm ready to go to that place you mentioned. And, please, you've got to help me!

Gorgias

How?

Sostratus

What do you mean how? Take me to that place you mentioned!

Gorgias

[*Eyeing Sostratus' costume, and smiling.*] Why? You plan to stand around in that fancy jacket of yours while we work?

Sostratus

[*Ingenuously.*] Certainly. Why not?

Davus

He'll start right in heaving rocks at you and calling you a lazy good-for-nothing. No, you're going to have to dig right along with us. That way, if he happens to see you he'll think you're a poor man who has to work for a living and he may let you exchange a word with him.

Sostratus

[*Enthusiastically.*] Let's go! I'm ready to do whatever you say.

Gorgias

[*Forced by Sostratus' eagerness to acquiesce against his better judgment, hopelessly.*] What are you forcing all this trouble on yourself for? [Shaking his head, goes to the front of his house and picks up a mattock and some extra work clothes.]

Davus

[*Aside.*] What I want is to put in such a day's work that we break this fellow's back. Then he'll stop coming around and bothering us.

Sostratus

Give me a mattock.

Gorgias

Here, take mine. I have some work to do on a fence I'm building; it's something I can't put off.

Sostratus

Let's have it. [As he takes the mattock and work clothes, feelingly.] You've saved my life!

Davus

[Unable to take any more of this.] I'll go along; you two follow me there.

[Goes out, stage right.]

Sostratus

Here's the way I feel: if I get the girl, I'll live; if not, I'll kill myself on the spot.

Gorgias

If you really mean what you say, the best of luck to you! [Follows DAVUS out.]

Sostratus

[To himself, looking at GORGIAS' departing figure.] Ye gods! The very things you thought would stop me have made me twice as keen to go ahead. The girl's been brought up without any women around her. There's been no aunt or nurse to give her wrong ideas; she doesn't know a thing about the bad side of life. She's been left to herself, with a father who's a strait-laced old peasant. What a blessing to come upon a girl like that! [Puts on the work clothes, shoulders the mattock, takes a few steps, then stops.] This mattock weighs a ton! It'll kill me! Oh, well, I can't weaken; now that I've started I've got to sweat it out. [Hurries out, stage right, to catch up with DAVUS and GORGIAS. A second later a man in a cook's outfit enters, stage left, pulling mightily on a rope, on the other end of which is a sheep that is pulling mightily in the opposite direction. The man is SICON, the chef—or rather, chef and caterer—whom SOSTRATUS' mother had sent GETA out to hire for her party. SICON has no small opinion of himself and the importance of his profession. But if long on self-esteem, he's a bit short on brains.]

Sicon

[To himself.] This is some sheep! No ordinary animal, not

Sicon

[On tenterhooks.] What about? For god's sake, tell me!

Geta

[Disgusted.] You'll be the death of me. She thought she saw Pan—

Sicon

[Interrupting, pointing to the grotto.] You mean the one from here?

Geta

[Patiently.] The one from here.

Sicon

Do what?

Geta

[Continuing.]—take her son Sostratus—

Sicon

[Interrupting again, with a knowing nod.] A fine young fellow.

Geta

[Doggedly determined to end his sentence.]—clap him in irons—

Sicon

Oh, my god!

Geta

—give him some work clothes and a mattock, and order him to go digging in this field alongside here.

Sicon

Amazing!

Geta

That's why we're making this sacrifice. It's an evil omen. We want to turn it into a good one.

Sicon

[Awed.] Now I understand. [Galvanized into action by what he's just heard.] All right, pick up the mats again and bring them inside. Let's get the seats set up in there and everything else all ready. Heaven help us, I don't want anything to hold up the sacrifice when they come. [Noticing that GETA is standing there eyeing the stack of mats darkly, jovially.] Wipe the frown off! You old good-for-nothing, I'll tie the feed bag on you today for reall All the food you want.

Geta

[Giving him a fishy stare.] I've always had a good word to say for you and your cooking—but I don't trust you.

[GETA picks up his load of mats and the two enter the cave. The stage is now empty, and the CHORUS reappears to dance an entr'acte.]

Act Three

[The door of Cnemon's house opens and CNEMON comes out. He calls to SIMIKE inside, the ancient female who is his only servant.

Cnemon

[Through the doorway.] Simike! Lock the door and don't open up for anyone until I get back. And that probably won't be until after dark.

[CNEMON turns from the door and is about to trudge out to his fields when he catches sight of GETA emerging from the cave. GETA walks forward and stands looking toward the wings, stage left, as if he were expecting someone. Suddenly a young SERVANT GIRL enters, with a number of others behind her.

Geta

[Shouting to the girl.] Plangon! Get a move on! We should have been done with the sacrifice by now!

Cnemon

[Aghast as he eyes the procession straggling in.] What the devil does this mean? What's this crowd? Oh, damn them!

Geta

[To one of the girls who is carrying a flute.] Parthenis, some music for Pan! No silent processions for this god, that's what they say.

[By this time there is a whole group on stage, mostly girls plus a few men. They are Sostratus' mother's servants, and they are carrying all the paraphernalia needed for a sacrifice and a party: incense burner, holy cakes, holy water, kitchenware, tableware, and so on. SOSTRATUS' MOTHER herself is in the crowd. At this

point SICON comes out of the cave, takes one look at the group, and hurries forward to take over.

Sicon

[*Roaring at the servants.*] So you finally made it! Good god, this is disgusting! We've been sitting around here waiting all this time. We got everything we could all ready.

Geta

[*Joining in.*] Believe me, the sheep certainly is: it practically died waiting.

Sicon

[*As before.*] Of course. The poor thing's not going to hang around while all of you take it easy. Come on now, inside, all of you! [As they start to file into the cave.] I want everything all set, the baskets, the holy water, the incense—[To a final straggler.] Hey, you! Dumbbell! What are you gaping at? [Hustles him inside. CNEMON is now alone on the stage.]

Cnemon

[*Shaking his fist at the figures disappearing into the cave.*] God damn you! [To himself.] They're going to keep me from my work. I can't leave the house now. [Savagely.] These nymphs give me nothing but trouble! I guess I'll just have to tear my house down and move somewhere else. [Gesturing toward the group in the cave.] They sacrifice like a bunch of thieves. They bring couches and jugs of wine—but not for the service. Oh, no, it's for themselves. The incense is for the service and so is the holy cake. They put that on the altar, all right, all of it. And then they add the animal's tail and its gall bladder because no one wants them. But the rest they gulp down themselves. [Pounding on his door.] Simikel! Hurry and open the door! [To himself, worriedly.] I guess I'll have to stay around and keep an eye on things.

[The door is opened and CNEMON goes inside. A second later GETA comes out of the cave. His first words are addressed to one of the servants inside.

Geta

[*Shouting through the entrance of the cave.*] You say you forgot to bring the pot? Why don't all of you go and sleep it off, you drunks! What are we going to do now?

[Leaves the entrance and makes his way toward CNEMON's door, grumbling to himself.] It looks like I'll have to bother one of the god's neighbors. [Knocks on the door and shouts.] Boy! [Continues his chain of complaints, punctuating it with shouts to rouse someone within.] God in heaven, if you ask me they don't grow them worse than that bunch of girls, anywhere.—Boy! —All they know how to do is get laid—Boy! Please!—and make nasty cracks about you if you catch them at it. Boy! What the devil is this? Boy! No one home? Ah —I think someone's coming.

[The door opens and CNEMON comes out.

Cnemon

[Raging.] Damn you, what are you hanging onto this door for? Speak up!

Geta

[Taken by surprise.] Well, you don't have to bite my head off!

Cnemon

By god, I'll eat you alive. [Takes a threatening step toward him.]

Geta

[Beating a hasty retreat.] None of that, for god's sake!

Cnemon

[Caustically.] Who are you, one of my creditors, you god-forsaken good-for-nothing!

Geta

[From a safe distance.] I'm no creditor. Look, I didn't come here to collect a debt. I don't have the sheriff with me. I just came to ask you for a pot.

Cnemon

[Taken aback.] A pot?

Geta

A pot.

Cnemon

[Snarling.] Damn you, what do you think? That I'm the kind that can afford to sacrifice a whole ox and carry on the way you people do?

Geta

[Aside.] If you want my opinion, you wouldn't sacrifice a snail. [To CNEMON.] It's all right, my good man, I'll go. The servants told me to knock on the door and ask

for a pot. That's what I did. I drew a blank. I'll go back and tell them so. [To himself, as he walks away.]

Ye gods! That old man's got fangs! [Enters the cave.]

Cnemon

[Balefully watching GETA go off.] A bunch of wild animals! Come right up to your door and knock as if you were their best friend. [Shaking his fist at the cave.] If I catch any of you coming up to this door, and if I don't make an example of him for everyone around here, you can take it for granted—[Pauses a second, then comes up with what to him is a terrible indictment.]—that I'm just another of the common herd! [Turning to go inside.] I don't know why I let that one off so easy. He was lucky, whoever he was! [Enters his house.]

[A second later SICON comes out of the cave. His first words are addressed to GETA inside.

Sicon

[Through the entrance of the cave, disgustedly.] You damn fool, he insulted you! Maybe you asked him like some dumb hayseed would. [Grumbling to himself as he walks toward CNEMON's door.] Some people just don't understand how to do things like this. I'm an expert at it. I've got thousands of customers back in the city and I pester their neighbors and borrow stuff from all of them. When you borrow from somebody you've got to use a little flattery. If some old gent answers the door, the first thing I do is call him "My dear sir"; if it's an old woman, I call her "Lady"; if it's a middle-aged woman, I call her "Madame"; if it's a servant, "My good man" or "My dear boy." [Suddenly reminded of the servants' forgetfulness that caused him this trouble in the first place.] You ought to be hung, all of you! What stupidity! [Knocking on the door.] Boys! Boys! Please! My dear sir, would you mind coming out? I'd like to speak to you.

Cnemon

[As he opens the door.] You back again?

Sicon

Yes, sir, for the same reason.

Cnemon

[Eyeing him balefully.] Are you deliberately trying to make me lose my temper? Didn't I tell you to keep

away from this door? [Turning and calling inside.]

Simikel Bring me the whip!

Sicon

[Beating a hasty retreat.] Oh, no, my dear sir, no, not that! For god's sake, not that! [Starts to run away.]

Cnemon

[Armed with the whip and raging mad.] Come back here, you!

Sicon

[Forgetting his principles.] Well, god damn you—

Cnemon

Still jabbering, eh?

Sicon

[Getting control of himself again and stopping a safe distance away, resentfully.] I only came here to ask you for a pot.

Cnemon

I don't have a pot and I don't have a cleaver, and I don't have salt or vinegar or anything else. I've told everybody in the neighborhood, once and for all, not to come near me.

Sicon

You didn't tell me.

Cnemon

I'm telling you now.

Sicon

Not very nicely, I must say. Please, couldn't you just tell me where I could borrow one?

Cnemon

[To the world at large.] What did I tell you? [To SICON.]

Are you going to keep on jabbering at me?

Sicon

Well, thanks anyway.

Cnemon

I don't want any thanks from any of you.

Sicon

All right then, no thanks.

Cnemon

[As he turns to go inside, to himself.] What I have to put up with! And nothing I can do about it.

Sicon

[To himself.] He just about tore me to pieces! That's what I get for asking like a gentleman! God, it certainly

makes a difference whose door you knock on. Now, if everybody around here is ready to take a poke at a man, things aren't going to be so easy for me. [Thinking a moment.] I think the best thing would be to broil all the meat. At least I've got a broiling pan. [Addressing, as it were, the whole district.] People of Phyle—GOODBYE! [To himself again.] I'll just make do with what I have. [Enters the cave.]

[Enter SOSTRATUS, stage right. He looks all in: he is covered with dirt, sweat is streaming off him, his hair is disheveled, and he limps along holding his back.

Sostratus

[To himself.] If anyone's running short of trouble, the thing for him to do is go hunting in Phyle. Oh my aching back! And spine, and neck—why go into details? My whole body! [Pauses and shakes his head mournfully.] I acted just like a child. The minute I got there I pitched right in, lifting the mattock way up, the way an old hand would, maybe even more so. I pegged away happily—but not for very long. Soon I began turning around to see whether the old man was coming with the girl. Next thing I knew I had to start pressing my hands on my back to straighten up. At first I did it without letting anyone see me, but then, when the work dragged on and on, I began to get curvature of the spine. Pretty soon I was stiff as a board. But everything was quiet: nobody came. And the sun began to roast me. There I was, barely able to straighten up each time and then going right down again fast with my whole body, like the boom on a crane, when Gorgias took a look at me and said, "Well, I don't think he's going to come today." "What should we do then?" I shot right back at him. "Let's knock off for the present. We'll look for him tomorrow," he said. Davus was there and he relieved me at the mattock. Well, that's the way the first round went. Then I came back here, god knows I can't tell why. Things just automatically draw me to this place.

[GETA appears at the mouth of the cave. His first words are to SICON inside.

Geta

[Through the entrance of the cave, exasperated.] What's the trouble? Man dear, you think I've got sixty hands?

I light the fire for you, follow you around, lug, wash, cut up the animal's innards, make the dough, carry everything around—[Turns from the mouth of the cave rubbing at his eyes.] Look at me—half blind from the smoke in therel If you ask me, I'm doing nothing but run this affair for them!

Sosstratus

[Delighted to see him.] Hey, Geta!

Geta

[Still rubbing his eyes, grumpily.] Who wants me?

Sosstratus

I do.

Geta

[Not recognizing Sosstratus in his work clothes.] And who are you?

Sosstratus

Don't you see me?

Geta

[Finally recognizing him, and, knowing it probably means more work, not exactly overjoyed.] I see you. Sosstratus.

Sosstratus

Tell me, what are you doing here?

Geta

What am I doing? We've just finished with the sacrifice and now we're getting dinner ready for you people.

Sosstratus

Is my mother inside?

Geta

Came a long time ago.

Sosstratus

And my father?

Geta

We're expecting him. But you go on in.

Sosstratus

I've got some things to do around here first. [To himself.] In some ways this sacrifice didn't come at a bad time at all. I'll go right now, just as I am, and invite Gorgias and Davus. Once they've joined in the festivities, they'll be of even more use as allies in getting me my bride.

Geta

[Overhearing.] What! You're going to go out and invite more people to dinner! [Changes his attitude abruptly

and shrugs his shoulders.] So far as I'm concerned there can be three thousand of you. I knew all along I wasn't going to get even a taste of anything. Where am I going to get it from, anyway? Go on, invite the whole world. After all, you people just slaughtered a fine sheep, a beauty, really something to see. [Gesturing toward the servants in the cave, sarcastically.] *But those women—they're so charming—would they share anything with me? God, no! Not even a pinch of salt!*

Sosstratus

[Having had a moment, during GETA's grumblings, to think his plan over and more pleased than ever with it.] Geta, before this day is over everything's going to be all right. [Turning toward the grotto, ebulliently.] Pan, this is one prophecy I'll take it on myself to make. [Suddenly aware of his presumption, deferentially.] But I'll have a prayer for you every time I pass this way and I'll always treat you with every respect. [Goes off, stage right, to get GORGIAS and DAVUS.]

[The door of Cnemon's house flies open and SIMIKE, CNEMON's aged servant, bursts out. She is in a state of alarm that borders on the pathological.

Simike

[Screaming.] I'm done for! It's all over! This is the end!

Geta

[Stopped by the noise just as he was about to enter the cave.] Oh, damn, some woman's come out of the old man's house.

Simike

[Recovering somewhat, to herself.] What's going to happen to me? I wanted to see if I could get the bucket out of the well myself before Cnemon found out, so I tied his hoe to a rope. Well, it wasn't strong enough, and it was rotten anyway, and suddenly it broke.

Geta

[Disgusted, aside.] Naturally!

Simike

[To herself.] So now, heaven help me, I've lost the hoe down the well along with the bucket!

Geta

[Aside.] Only thing left is to throw yourself in too.

Simike

[To herself.] And it would happen just now, when he

wants to shift some manure that's in the yard. He's been running around looking for the hoe, yelling bloody murder—[*Hearing a noise at the door, starts.*] and now he's coming out here!

Geta

[To SIMIKE.] Run! Run for your life! Woman, he'll slaughter you! [See CNEMON coming out.] Too late. Better protect yourself!

Cnemon

[Roaring.] Where's that thief?

Simike

[Terrified.] Please! I didn't mean to do it!

Cnemon

[Savagely.] Get inside!

Simike

[As before.] Please! Please! What are you going to do?

Cnemon

I'm going to tie you to a rope and lower you down the well myself.

Simike

[Shrieking.] No! Oh, this is terrible!

Cnemon

What's more, by god, I'm going to use the same rope. And I only hope it's rotten through and through.

Simike

[In despair, to herself.] I'll call Davus. He's somewhere around.

Cnemon

Call Davus? How dare you talk like that, you old witch! Are you deaf? Get inside! Quick! [SIMIKE rushes inside. To himself, peevishly.] Right now this cutting myself off from everybody has me on the spot. Well, since no one else will, I'll go down the well myself. What else can I do?

Geta

[Overhearing him, maliciously.] We'll be glad to give you a rope.

Cnemon

[Turning on him.] Before you give me anything you can go fry in hell! [Goes into his house, slamming the door behind him.]

Geta

[To himself.] Got so sore he had to run back inside. Poor

devil, what a life he leads! Perfect example of the typical Athenian peasant: becomes an expert in hardship fighting it out with the rocks around here that grow nothing better than thyme and sage, and getting nothing good out of life. [Stands silent for a moment pondering this. Then, hearing a noise, looks toward the wings, stage right.] Here comes, Sostratus. And he's got his guests with him. [Looks again, not believing his eyes.] They're some of the local farmhands! What a crazy idea! What's he bringing them here for? Where did he get to know them anyway?

[SOSTRATUS, GORGIAS and DAVUS enter, stage right. SOSTRATUS has issued his invitation and GORGIAS has obviously been trying to beg off.

Sostratus

[Emphatically.] I won't hear of your doing otherwise. We have plenty. God almighty, there isn't a man alive who can refuse to come to dinner when his friend's made a sacrifice and is holding a party. And remember, I've been a friend of yours a long time, even before I ever saw you. [Handing GORGIAS his work clothes.] Take these things, bring them inside, and then come right back.

Gorgias

I can't leave my mother alone in the house.

Sostratus

Well, take care of whatever she needs. I'll meet you right away.

[SOSTRATUS goes into the cave, and GORGIAS with DAVUS at his heels, into his house. The stage is now clear, and the CHORUS comes on and dances an entr'acte.

Act Four

[The door of CNEMON's house is flung open and SIMIKE bursts out, wild-eyed and screaming at the top of her lungs.

Simike

Help! Oh, my god, someone help!

[SICON, attracted by the noise, emerges from the grotto.

Sicon

[Grumbling.] In the name of all that's holy, can't you people let us carry on a service in peace! You insult us, you hit us, you scream—what a crazy household!

Simike

[Running up to him.] My master! He fell into the well!

Sicon

How?

Simike

How? He started to do down to get the hoe and the bucket, and he slipped and fell all the way to the bottom.

Sicon

[A broad grin spreading over his face.] Well, by god, it couldn't have happened to a better man! Old lady, you've got a job now.

Simike

What?

Sicon

Pick up a boulder or a big rock or something like that and heave it on top of him.

Simike

[Too distraught to resent SICON'S attitude.] Please! Go down after him!

Sicon

What? And become like that fellow in Aesop's fable and have to fight a dog in a well? Not on your life!

Simike

[Leaving him and running toward GORGIAS' house.] Gorgias! Where in the world are you!

Gorgias

[As he comes out of his house.] Here I am. [Seeing the old woman.] Simike! What's the matter?

Simike

[Impatiently.] The matter? I'll tell it all over again: Cnemon fell into the well.

Gorgias

[Galvanized into action, rushes to the entrance of the grotto.] Sostratus! Come on out here! [As SOSTRATUS dashes out of the cave, GORGIAS turns to SIMIKE.] Show us the way! Come on, inside now! Quick! [The three rush into CNEMON'S house.]

Sicon

[Watches them go in, then turns and addresses the audience with an air of great satisfaction.] I'll be damned! Now I believe in Providence. Cnemon, you cheapskate, so you wouldn't lend people a measly pot for a sacrifice, you had to begrudge it, eh? Now that you're down there, drink the well dry so you won't have to share the water with anyone. These nymphs here have taken a hand and given me my revenge—and it's just what you deserve. [Puffing out his chest.] No one ever harmed a chef yet and got away with it. There's something sacred about our profession. A waiter's a different matter; you can do what you want to a waiter. [Yielding to curiosity, walks over to CNEMON's door and puts his ear to it.]

Cnemon's Daughter

[From inside.] Oh, my god! Oh, he's not dead, is he? Papa dear!

Sicon

[To the audience.] Somebody's screaming and moaning.

[Four lines are lost here in which Sicon very likely relayed to the audience whatever he could pick up about the way the rescue was going.] . . . that way he'll be able to haul the poor devil out. [Grinning.] Lord in heaven, can you imagine what a lovely sight it's going to be—the old man carried out here in front of the house, shivering away? Gentlemen, so help me, nothing would give me greater pleasure than to see him then. [Walking to the cave and shouting into it.] You women in there! Let's hold a service for the rescue party. And say a prayer for the old man to be saved—provided he's left good and lame, a cripple. That way we'll have no trouble whatsoever from him even though he is the god's next-door neighbor and around here whenever anyone comes to sacrifice. This will mean a lot to me the next time someone hires me. [Enters the cave.]

[The door of Cnemon's house flies open and SOSTRATUS comes running out.

Sostratus

[Flushed and in a state of great excitement, to the audience.] Gentlemen! I swear to you, on my honor, by

heaven, by all that's holy, I never in my whole life saw anyone pick a better moment to miss drowning by a hair. What a marvelous time I had! The minute we got inside there, Gorgias jumped into the well. The girl and I just waited around the rim. What else was there to do? Except that she kept tearing her hair and beating her breast and crying her eyes out and I [Archly.], the fine fair-haired boy, stood by and played nursemaid. I kept begging and pleading with her not to carry on so, and all the time I just couldn't take my eyes off her. She's a work of art! And no ordinary one either. I forgot all about the old man groaning down there—except that it was a real nuisance to have to keep hauling away all the time. As a matter of fact, I nearly killed him: I was so busy looking at the girl that I let go of the rope a couple of times. But that Gorgias is an Atlas—and no ordinary one either; he managed to hang on and finally fished him out. As soon as the old man was safe, I had to come out here. I just couldn't hold her—that's how madly in love with her I am. I'm getting ready—wait; they're coming out. [Cnemon's door opens, and CNEMON, supported by GORGIAS and flanked by his DAUGHTER, comes hobbling out.] My god! There's a sight for you! [Moves off to the side, out of their range of vision.]

[Slowly CNEMON, GORGIAS, and the GIRL make their way from the door to stage center. There they stand, the girl mute and terrified, and the old man kept from collapsing by his stepson's arm.

Gorgias

[With great solicitude.] Cnemon! Tell me, is there anything you want?

Cnemon

[Weakly.] What can I want? I'm a terribly sick man.

Gorgias

Come on now, buck up!

Cnemon

[Dully.] It'll soon be all over, and then I won't bother you any more for the rest of time.

Gorgias

See how bad it is to cut yourself off from everybody? You almost lost your life just now! At your age you've

got to have someone keep an eye on you as long as you live.

Cnemon

[*Weakly.*] I'm seriously hurt and I know it. Gorgias, go call your mother. [Shaking his head ruefully.] It certainly looks as if the only way we learn is by bitter experience. [Turning to the girl.] My dear, will you take my arm and help hold me up?

Sostratus

[*Aside.*] Lucky man!

Cnemon

[*Overhearing, turns, sees him—and revives at the prospect of being irascible again.*] And just what the devil are you standing around here for? [*Eight lines are lost here.* After concluding his remarks to Sostratus, Cnemon turned to his son and daughter and his wife, Myrrhina, who had come on stage in the meantime, and continued to unburden his heart, particularly his anguish at his crippled condition.] I would have preferred to die and not have been saved. And neither of you could have changed my mind about this. [Holding up his hand as they attempt to protest.] Don't argue with me. [Shaking his head ruefully.] I guess the big mistake I made was in thinking I was the one person who was completely self-sufficient, who'd never have need of anyone else. Well, now when I see how strange and sudden the end of a man's life can be, I realize how little I knew. A man has to have someone around who can look after him. [*Falls silent a moment, brooding.* Then, passionately.] But, as god's my witness, what ruined me was seeing how everybody lived, the ways in which they went grubbing after money—I was convinced the person didn't exist who had a kind thought for anybody else. This was what blinded me. [Dropping his voice and speaking with deep feeling.] Only now have I gotten the proof, from one man—Gorgias. He did something that only the finest sort of person would have done. I never let him come near my door, never helped him in the slightest, never said hello to him, never exchanged a word with him—and yet he willingly saved my life. Anyone else in his place would have said, and with good reason: "You never let me near your door, so I'm not going there now. You never

went out of your way for me, so now I won't for you." Well, my boy, whether I die now—and the pain I'm in convinces me I will—or whether I live, I'm acknowledging you here and now as my son. Everything I happen to own you are to consider yours. [Taking the girl's hand and putting it in GORGIAS'.] I put her into your care. Get her a husband. [Shaking his head sadly.] You see, even if I were a well man, I couldn't find one; after all, the man doesn't exist who could satisfy me. If I survive, just let me go on living the way I want. Everything else I leave to you to do—you've got good sense, thank god, and you're the natural choice as guardian of your sister. Divide my estate in two. Give her half as a dowry. You take the other half, run it yourself, and just give your mother and me enough to live on. [Turning to the girl.] Help me, my dear; I want to go in and lie down. I think the sign of a man of good sense is that he doesn't say any more than he has to. [Continuing right on, to GORGIAS.] But there's one thing I want you to know, my boy. I want to say a few words to you about life and character. If there were only men of good will in this world, we wouldn't have any law courts, people wouldn't drag each other off to prison, there wouldn't be any wars, and we'd all be satisfied with a modest lot in life. But you probably like things the way they are, so you'd better live your life accordingly. [Wryly.] Besides, you won't have a mean old grouch in your way any longer.

Gorgias

[Diplomatically.] Very well. I agree to everything you say. But I insist that you help me find a husband for my sister just as soon as we can. Someone who'll suit you.

Cnemon

[Sharply.] Listen here, I meant every word I said. Now, in god's name, leave me alone!

Gorgias

You see, there's someone who wants to meet you—

Cnemon

[Interrupting.] In god's name, no!

Gorgias

[Stoutly finishing his sentence.] —and ask your permission to marry her.

Cnemon

[Starting to hobble toward his door.] It's none of my business from now on.

Gorgias

[Calling after him.] He helped save your life.

Cnemon

[Stopping abruptly, interested.] Who is he?

Gorgias

[Pointing to Sostratus.] There he is. [Beckoning to Sostratus.] Come here.

Cnemon

[Scrutinizing him closely, to Gorgias.] He's all sunburned. Is he a farmer?

Gorgias

[Quicky.] Oh, yes! He's no rich playboy who sits around all day doing nothing.

[Five lines are lost at this point. Apparently Cnemon agrees to the match, leaves it to Gorgias to arrange the details, and, supported by his wife and daughter, goes inside to lie down.]

Sostratus

My father won't raise any objections.

Gorgias

Then, Sostratus, I hereby bequeath her to you, in front of these witnesses, and make over to you whatever portion of the estate it's fair for you to get as dowry. You entered into this affair with an honest heart and in all sincerity; and you didn't think it beneath you to do whatever you could to marry her. Here you are, a man raised in the lap of luxury, and yet you were willing to handle a mattock and dig away and not spare yourself. This is what shows whether a man understands the meaning of equality—if, even though he's rich, he can take orders from someone who's poor. That kind of man will be able to take the ups and downs of life in stride. You've given me enough proof of your character. I only hope you can stay just as you are.

Sostratus

[Swelling under Gorgias' paeans of praise.] I can even do better than that—but, well, this praising oneself isn't exactly the thing to do, you know. [Turns away in embarrassment and happens to look toward the wings,

stage left.] There's my father! He couldn't have come at a better time.

Gorgias

[*Looking in surprise.] Is Callippides your father?*

Sostratus

Of course.

Gorgias

Well, by god, he's one rich man who deserves every cent he has. When it comes to running a farm, nobody can beat him.

[*CALLIPPIDES enters, stage left. He's a portly old fellow, dressed modestly but carefully and in the best of taste. He gives the impression of being affable and good-natured despite the fact that at the moment he's in a foul temper.*

Callippides

[*As he comes on stage, to himself.] I've probably missed everything. They must have picked the bones of that sheep clean by now and all gone off into the fields.*

Gorgias

[*To SOSTRATUS, sotto voce.] My god! It sounds as if he's starving. Shall we tell him what's happened right now, or wait?*

Sostratus

[*To GORGIAS, sotto voce.] Let him eat first. He'll be easier to handle.*

Callippides

[*Seeing SOSTRATUS.] Hey, Sostratus, have you people finished eating?*

Sostratus

Yes, but there's some left for you. Go on in.

Callippides

That's just what I'm going to do. [*Hurries into the cave.*

Gorgias

You go in too if you have anything you want to talk to him about in private.

Sostratus

You'll wait for me in your house, right?

Gorgias

I'll stay right there.

Sostratus

I'll call you in a little while.

[SOSTRATUS goes into the cave and GORGIAS into his house.

The stage is now empty, and the CHORUS comes out and dances an entr'acte.

Act Five

[SOSTRATUS and CALLIPIDES emerge from the cave. CALLIPIDES' disposition has benefited enormously from the meal he has just put away, and the tête-à-tête with his son has, to all appearances, left him unperturbed. Not so SOSTRATUS, who is clearly rather upset.

Sostratus

[Unhappily.] Father, you haven't done everything I wanted—or expected of you.

Callippides

[Surprised.] What's the matter? Didn't I agree with you? I want you to have this girl you're in love with. I say you should marry her.

Sostratus

[Moodily.] Well, you don't seem very happy about it.

Callippides

Ye gods, I know this much: when a young fellow makes up his mind to take the plunge because he's in love, I say that's a marriage that's bound to last.

Sostratus

[Blurting out what's been troubling him.] Look here. In my opinion Gorgias is just as good as any of us. Since I'm marrying his sister, how can you refuse now to let him marry my sister in return?

Callippides

[Refusing to take the matter seriously.] Perish the thought! I don't want to acquire two impoverished in-laws. One in the family's enough.

Sostratus

[Refusing to take the matter lightly.] Ah, so it's money you're thinking about. Now there's something you just

can't count on. If you're sure you can keep it to the end of your days, then go right ahead, don't share it with another soul. But you don't have the final say about it; everything you've got you owe to luck, not to yourself. So don't begrudge it to others, Father. Lady Luck can always take every penny away from you and give it all to someone who doesn't deserve it. That's why I insist, Father, that, so long as you have it in your hands, you be generous with it, help people, make life easier for as many as you can. Such acts never die. If Fate ever deals you a blow, those you've helped will help you. You know, it's much better to have a friend you can see before your eyes than any treasure you've got buried out of sight.

Callippides

[*Resentfully.*] Sostratus! You know the kind of man I am. I'm not going to take the money I've made to the grave with me. Anyway, how could I? It's all intended for you. [Sighs good-naturedly.] You want to win yourself a new friend? Go ahead, put him to the test, and good luck to you. But you don't need to preach sermons to me. Go on, hand the money out, give it away, share it. You've convinced me. Absolutely.

Sostratus

[*Dubiously.*] You really mean that?

Callippides

[*Heartily.*] Every word of it, believe me. Don't you worry your head about that.

Sostratus

[*Finally convinced.*] Then I'll call Gorgias.

[*At this moment GORGIAS emerges from the door of his house and walks toward them.*

Gorgias

[*To the two of them, apologetically.*] I was on my way out, and, as I came to the door, I couldn't help overhearing every word you two said. [To SOSTRATUS.] What can I say? I consider you a true friend and I can't tell you how devoted I am to you. But I don't want a way of life that's beyond me. God knows I couldn't put up with it even if I wanted it!

Sostratus

I don't know what you're talking about.

Gorgias

I'm giving you my sister to marry. But to marry yours—well, thanks, but . . .

Sosratus

What do you mean, "thanks but"?

Gorgias

[*Blurting out something he has obviously been giving serious thought.*] I don't think I'd enjoy living a life of leisure on money that other people have worked for. I have to earn my own way.

Sosratus

Gorgias! Stop talking nonsense! Don't you think you're good enough for her?

Gorgias

Oh, I think I'm good enough for her, all right. But I feel it's wrong for a man with a modest portion to accept a large one.

Callippides

[*Breaking in on the conversation before it gets too far off the ground.*] God in heaven, this is very noble and all that, but you're being silly.

Gorgias

How so?

Callippides

You have no money but you want to act like someone who does. [Smiling.] All right, you've convinced me: I'll give you just a modest portion.

Gorgias

And now you've convinced *me*—doubly. If I don't accept your offer, I'll not only be a poor man but a senseless one in the bargain. [To SOSTRATUS.] Your father has shown me the road to sanity.

Sosratus

[*Rubbing his hands in delight.*] Well, then, the only thing left to do is arrange the details.

Callippides

[To GORGIAS, solemnly.] My boy, I hereby betroth my daughter to you to be your lawfully wedded wife. And I'm going to give you a dowry of ninety thousand dollars.

Gorgias

And I have thirty thousand that goes with my sister.

Callippides

You do? Now don't you give too much—

Gorgias

[Interrupting stoutly.] I have plenty.

Callippides

[Putting an arm around him, and smiling.] Keep all that you have, my boy. Now go and bring your mother and sister over here to meet the women in our family.

Gorgias

Yes, we must do that.

Sostratus

[Enthusiastically.] Let's all of us spend the night here and have a party. And tomorrow we'll hold a double wedding. Gorgias, bring Cnemon over. He probably stands a better chance of getting the attention he needs with us over here.

Gorgias

[Gloomily.] He won't come, Sostratus.

Sostratus

[As before.] Talk him into it!

Gorgias

If I can. [Turns and goes into CNEMON'S house.]

Sostratus

Father, you know what we ought to do now? Arrange a nice drinking session for us and a get-together for the women.,

Callippides

[Dryly.] It'll be just the other way around, believe me: they'll have the nice drinking session, and we'll have the get-together. Well, I'll go ahead and get things ready for you fellows. [Enters the cave.]

Sostratus

[To CALLIPPIDES as he leaves.] Do that. [To himself, musingly.] If a man's got sense he'll never give up, no matter how hopeless a situation is. There isn't anything you can't get—if you care enough and work hard enough for it. I'm the living proof. Not a man alive would have thought this marriage was possible—and yet I brought it off. And in just one day!

[The door of Cnemon's house opens and GORGIAS comes out followed by his HALF-SISTER and his MOTHER.

Gorgias

[To his MOTHER and SISTER.] Come, let's hurry.

Sostratus

[Calling to them.] Right this way. [Calling to his MOTHER in the cave.] Mother, would you please make these people welcome?

[The two women enter the cave.

Gorgias

Cnemon's not coming. He even begged me to take the old woman away so he could be completely by himself.

Sostratus

What can you do with a man like that?

Gorgias

That's the way he is.

Sostratus

I hope he enjoys himself. Let's go in.

Gorgias

[Holding back.] I'm terribly embarrassed when there are women around.

Sostratus

[Taking him by the arm and leading him in.] Don't talk nonsense! Come on in, will you? You've got to remember that it's all in the family now. [The two enter the cave.

[Cnemon's door opens and SIMIKE comes out. She stops at the threshold to talk to CNEMON inside.

Simike

[Through the doorway.] All right, all right, I'll go too. Lie there all alone. Dear, dear, you're simply impossible! They were nice enough to invite you to the party, but you had to say no. Something dreadful is going to happen to you yet, I swear, worse than what you're reveling in now.

[SIMIKE closes the door and starts walking toward the cave. At this moment GETA comes out of the cave and stands at the entrance, talking to the people inside.

Geta

[Grumbling at having to leave the party, particularly for such a purpose.] All right, I'll go and see how he is.

[A mocking trill on the flute is heard from inside.]

Damn you, what are you tootling at me for? I still have things to do. Wait, will you? They're sending me to look in on the patient.

Simike

[Overhearing.] Yes, one of you people should go inside and sit with him. My little girl is leaving me, and I want to go and see her and kiss her goodbye.

Geta

[His whole attitude changing as inspiration seizes him, heartily.] You're absolutely right. You go ahead. I'll take care of him in the meantime. [Watches SIMIKE enter the cave. As soon as she disappears inside, to himself gleefully.] I've been just waiting for a chance like this. [Geta has two more lines which have been lost. After delivering them he calls through the mouth of the cave.] Sicon! Come on out here! Hurry! [Waits impatiently during the few seconds it takes SICON to appear.] My god, you're slow!

Sicon

Were you calling me?

Geta

I certainly was. Listen, do you want to get even for the insults you had to take a little while ago?

Sicon

[In high dudgeon.] Me? Insulted? What the hell do you mean by that nonsense?

Geta

[Excitedly.] The old grouch is fast asleep, all alone.

Sicon

[Forgetting his dudgeon and interested, but hesitant.] How's he doing anyway?

Geta

Not too bad.

Sicon

[Worriedly.] Do you think he could get up and start coming after us?

Geta

He's not going to do any getting up if you ask me.

Sicon

[Enthusiastically.] Those words are music to my ears. I'll go in there and ask to borrow things. That'll drive him out of his mind.

Geta

Wait. I've got a better idea. Let's first haul him outside and put him down here. Then let's bang on the door like

this [Gesturing.] and ask to borrow things, and watch his temperature rise. Boy, will we have fun!

Sicon

[Worried again.] I'm scared of Gorgias. If he catches us, he'll tan our hides.

Geta

[Gesturing toward the cave.] Listen to the racket in there.

They're getting drunk. Nobody'll hear a thing. [Grimly.] Listen—we've got to tame this grouch. Don't you see? We're his in-laws, he's one of the family now—and if he keeps on the way he is, what a cross to bear!

Sicon

[Nodding assent gloomily.] You're right.

Geta

The one thing to watch out for is that nobody sees you when you bring him out here. All right, you go a little ahead of me.

Sicon

[Heads toward Cnemon's door and then stops.] Wait a second. Now don't you run away and leave me inside.

[GETA shakes his head vigorously to reassure him.] And for god's sake, don't make any noise!

Geta

I'm not making a sound, I swear.

[The two disappear into the house. A second later they emerge, GETA in the lead and SICON after him, doubled under the weight of CNEMON, still asleep, slung on his back.]

Geta

[Whispering.] Over here to the right.

Sicon

[Staggering over to the spot where GETA is standing, whispering.] Here you are.

Geta

[Whispering.] Put him down here. Now's the time!

[The two walk stealthily up to the door of CNEMON's house and take their stand there.]

Sicon

[Excitedly.] I'll go first. Ready—you take the beat from me. [Starts pounding on the door in a regular rhythm and shouting to the imaginary servants inside.] Boy! Hey, boy! Hey there, boys! Boy! Boys!

Cnemon

[*Waking with a start and not yet fully aware of what is happening to him, groaning.*] Oh, my god, this is the end of me!

Geta

[*Joining SICON in the measured pounding and shouting.*]

Hey there, boys! Boy! Hey, boy! Boy! Boys!

Cnemon

My god, it's the end, the end. Who is it anyway? [*Painfully raising himself on this elbow and taking a look, disgustedly.*] You're from over there, aren't you? What do you want?

Sicon

[*To the imaginary servants inside.*] I want to borrow some pots from you people. And a bowl.

Cnemon

[*Shouting.*] Lift me up, somebody!

Sicon

[*Ignoring him.*] You have some, all right. I know it for sure.

Geta

[*Imitating SICON.*] And seven pot stands and twelve tables.

[*To imaginary servants outside.*] Hey, boys! Tell them inside there what we need. We're in a hurry.

Cnemon

[*Snarling.*] I don't have a thing.

Geta

You don't eh?

Cnemon

No, I don't. I told you so a thousand times.

Sicon

[*Taunting him.*] Should I go away then?

Cnemon

[*To himself.*] Oh, my god, my god, how did I get out here?

Who put me down here? [To SICON.] Yes! Get out of here!

Sicon

All right, I'll get out. [*Deliberately turns his back on CNEMON, faces the door, and starts the rhythmic pounding all over again.*] Boy! Hey, boy! Women! Men! Boy! Answer the door!

Cnemon

[*Raging.*] Are you crazy? You'll break down the door!

Sicon

[To the imaginary servants inside.] Bring us nine rugs.

Cnemon

Where are they going to get them?

Sicon

[As before.] And a tablecloth, a good one, an imported one.

And it's got to be a hundred feet long.

Cnemon

[In despair.] Why doesn't someone come out? The old woman—where's the old woman?

Sicon

I'll try some other house.

Cnemon

Go right ahead, both of you. [Shouting frantically.] Simikel

Simike! [To SICON, who is still planted at the door.] God damn you to hell, now what do you want?

Sicon

I want a bowl. A big metal bowl.

Cnemon

[Shouting desperately.] Lift me up, somebody!

Sicon

You've got one, all right. And I know you've got the tablecloth too.

Cnemon

There's no boy here and I don't have a bowl. [Gnashing his teeth.] I'll kill that Simike!

[GETA, who had been standing by passively the past moment, signals SICON to keep quiet, steps forward, and stands over the helpless CNEMON.

Geta

[Disgustedly.] Stop complaining and go back to sleep!

[Speaking slowly and with great emphasis.] You keep away from people. You hate women. You can't bear the idea of going to a friendly party. Well, you're going to put up with every one of these things. There's no one around to help you. Go ahead, start foaming at the mouth.

Sicon

Now, you're going to hear every single thing . . . [Two and a half lines are lost here in which Sicon launched into a description of what was going on in the cave.] For the first time in their lives your wife and your daughter have had a change in their luck: they've been

having a good time. [Clearing his throat and making other obvious preparations for an extended harangue.] To begin at the beginning, I undertook the arrangements for a party for these gentlemen. [Indicates by a gesture the people in the cave. CNEMON falls back and closes his eyes wearily.] You hear me? Wake up!

Cnemon

[Muttering ruefully.] I am awake, damn it.

Sicon

You want to go back in your house, eh? You're going to hear me out first. [Resuming his narrative manner.] There wasn't any time to waste so I laid out the places and set the tables myself. It was my responsibility and I did it. You hear me? [Striking his chest.] I'm a chef, that's what I am, and don't you forget it!

Geta

The man's got no guts.

[A burst of music and song and laughter is heard from the cave. CNEMON raises his head wonderingly and SICON seizes the chance to rub it in.

Sicon

By now someone in there has taken a fine old wine, poured it into the punch bowl, mixed it with spring water from the cave, and has been going the rounds inviting the men to have a drink. And someone else has been doing the same for the women. But it's like trying to irrigate a desert! You understand that, don't you? And one of the serving girls who got soused put a veil over her pretty little face, jumped out on the dance floor, and has been singing and swaying to the beat. And another joined hands and has been dancing with her.

Cnemon

God! What an ordeal I have to put up with!

Sicon

Get in there and start dancing!

Cnemon

Damn you! What do you want from me, anyway?

Sicon

Get in there, you old hick!

Cnemon

God damn it, no!

Sicon

Do you want us to carry you in there?

Cnemon

[*In despair, to himself.*] What can I do?

Sicon

Dance!

Cnemon

All right, carry me in. I'm probably better off putting up With it, no matter how bad it's going to be.

Geta

Now you're talking sense. [To SICON and a slave, one of a group that has clustered in the meantime about the entrance to the cave.] We've won! Donax, and you, Sicon, my fellow victors, pick him up and carry him inside [To CNEMON.] And you watch yourself; if we catch you making any trouble again, you're not going to get off so easily, believe me. [Shouting.] Bring us garlands and a torch, someone!

Sicon

[Taking a garland from a slave and handing it to GETA.]

Here, take this one. [As GETA claps it on CNEMON'S head, SICON comes forward and addresses the audience.] If you enjoyed the way we won the fight with this old troublemaker, let's have a hearty round of applause from all of you, every boy, youth, and man here!

And may that maid who loves to laugh, the noble goddess of victory, be on our side forever!